

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9796

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BBAK, HO

SUBJECT: STATUS OF ENRIQUE LOPEZ BALBOA

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1520

1. ENRIQUE LOPEZ BALBOA, VICE PRESIDENT OF UNITED BRANDS
LATIN AMERICAN OPERATIONS, AND HOUSTON LACOMBE, MANGER OF
UB IN HONDURAS, REQUESTED AN URGENT MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR
ON MORNING OF APRIL 20. IN MEETING, LOPEZ STATED THAT HE
HAD PRESSING PERSONAL REASONS (A VERY SICK MOTHER-IN-LAW AND
AN EXTREMELY WORRIED WIFE) FOR LEAVING HONDURAS. HE SAID
THAT HE HAD TALKED TO JORGE ARTURO REINA, COORDINATOR OF THE
INVESTIGATING COMMISSION ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, AND HAD BEEN
TOLD THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO REMAIN IN CONTRY UNTIL
INVESTIGATING COMMISSION OBTAINED VERIFICATION OF LOPEZ'
TESTIMONY CONCERNING UNITED BRANDS BRIBERY SCANDAL. IN THAT
REGARD, INVESTIGATING COMMISSION WHICH HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO
LEAVE FOR UNITED STATES ON APRIL 20 HAS NOW RESCHEDULED ITS
TRIP FOR APRIL 22.

2. LOPEZ SAID HE THOUGHT THAT IT WAS ABSURD FOR THE COMMISSION
TO KEEP HIM IN HONDURAS AFTER HE HAD GIVEN ALL HIS TESTIMONY.
HE OBSERVED THAT THE COMMISSION WOULD PROBABLY FIND IT
IMPOSSIBLE TO VERIFY BRIBE CHARGES IN ANY ABSOLUTE FORM, THAT
IS, WITH DULY AUTHENTICATED DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION. HE
EMPHASIZED SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO EXACERBATE
UB-GOH RELATIONS BY SEEMING TO "PROTEST TOO MUCH." HOWEVER,
HE DID WANT EMBASSY ADVICE ON HOW TO PROCEED SO THAT HE

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CAN LEAVE THE COUNTRY ASAP.

3. THE AMBASSADOR ADVISED LOPEZ CONTACT REINA AND TELL HIM ABOUT THE URGENT PERSONAL REASONS HE HAS FOR LEAVING THE COUNTRY. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO ADVISED LOPEZ, IF THE COMMISSION CONTINUES TO DENY HIM PERMISSION TO LEAVE, TO CONTACT OUR CONSUL TO PRESENT THE FACTS INVOLVED IN THE COMMISSION REFUSAL.

4. LOPEZ AGREED TO ATTEMPT TO CONTACT REINA DURING THE AFTERNOON OF APRIL 20 TO EXPLAIN HIS POSITION. SUGGEST THIS MATTER BE TAKEN UP WHEN COMMISSION CALLS ON DEPARTMENT. EMBASSY BELIEVES IT WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE FOR EMBASSY TO PRESS ISSUE WITH GOH.

SANCHEZ

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